

## Guidance for Development of Interoperable Communications Plans

When utilizing ODP program funds in the category of Interoperable Communications Equipment to build, upgrade, enhance, or replace communications systems, grantees and sub-grantees should develop a comprehensive interoperable communications plan before procurement decisions are made. Plans should be retained by the jurisdiction/agency and be available for review by the State Administrative Agency (SAA) and ODP. The plan should address, as appropriate, the areas of:

- *Building* public safety communication systems
- *Upgrading/enhancing* public safety communication systems and equipment
- *Replacing* public safety communication systems and equipment
- *Maintaining* public safety communication systems and equipment
- *Training* public safety staff on issues related to emergency response communications
- *Managing* public safety communications projects

The following considerations should be made when developing a communications plan:

Has the grantee already completed a plan that illustrates the agency's/jurisdiction's commitment to public safety communication priorities?

- Obtain/retain an executive summary that clearly illustrates how the proposed effort will lead to enhanced public safety communications interoperability.
- What type of multi-jurisdictional or multidisciplinary agreements does the agency possess (i.e., MOUs, interstate compacts, mutual aid agreements)?

Has the grantee considered public safety's operational needs of the communications equipment?

- In what type of topography/terrain does the agency operate?
- In what types of structures does the agency need to communicate? (i.e., tunnels, high-rise buildings)
- What methods of communication does the agency use? (i.e., email, paging, cellular calls, portable radio communications)
- What is the process for dispatching calls?
- Is the communications center independently owned and operate by the agency? Does it serve several public safety agencies in the jurisdiction? Is it a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional facility?
- Does the agency have the ability to patch across channels? If so, how many patches can be simultaneously set up? Is a dispatcher required to set up and break the patches down?
- What is the primary radio language used by the agency when communicating with other agencies or organizations? (i.e. 'plain' English, code)
- What types of equipment can immediately be deployed to provide short-term solutions for improved communications?

Has the grantee considered the system requirements to ensure interoperability with systems used by other disciplines or other levels of government?

- What type of equipment is currently used by the agency?
- Is there a regional, multi-jurisdictional, or statewide system in place that requires interoperability in order to communicate with other agencies? If so, how do you plan on interoperating/connecting to that system?
- Is the equipment compatible with the Project 25 suite of standards?
- For data-related systems, is the grantee using XML standards?
- How scalable is the system? Can it be used locally between agencies and jurisdictions, statewide, and at multi-state or national level?
- What internal and external security requirements exist in the architecture to secure information and maintain privacy levels for data as required by law?
- In the infrastructure shared with any other agency or organization? Is it owned or leased?
- Does the agency use analog or digital radio systems or both?
- Is the system conventional or trunked?
- Which radio frequencies are used to communicate with other public safety agencies?
- How many channels does the agency have solely designated for communication with other agencies?